

"A Longing for Justice"

by Rev. John C. Tittle

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 58: 5-12 NRSV

⁵Is such the fast that I choose, a day to humble oneself? Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush, and to lie in sackcloth and ashes? Will you call this a fast, a day acceptable to the Lord? ⁶Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? ⁷Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin? ⁸Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. ⁹Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am. If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil, ¹⁰if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday. ¹¹The Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail. ¹²Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in.

Discussion Questions:

1. God is described in the Scriptures as loving justice and being just in all of his ways. What does it say about God's character?
2. Do you think this passage is saying that worship is not important in God's sight, only justice?
3. What would you say to someone who says they are involved in helping the poor, so they don't need to worship?
4. What areas of doing justice do you see mentioned in this passage? Are there any that surprise you?
5. Why can justice be such a controversial topic?
6. Bible scholar NT Wright says there are three attitudes we can have towards justice. *What do you think of each one?*
 - a. We can say it's a childish fantasy that we need to grow out of and just face the real world.
 - b. We can seek to escape the nightmare of reality and just wish we could be in heaven right now as the world goes to hell in a handbasket.
 - c. We can say *there is* Someone speaking to us, a still small voice reminding us that we've been made for a world that involves justice now, but ultimately our world will be rescued at last.
7. The sermon mentioned that you can't be truly spiritual and socially indifferent simultaneously...how we relate to God is how we relate to others. *What do you think of that?*

8. How can we avoid becoming burned out or disillusioned as we obey God and “do justice”?
9. How is doing justice a blessing to others? How can it be a blessing to ourselves to do justice? (see vss. 10-12)
10. Is there a particular area of justice outreach that interests you or you would like to learn more about? What’s a difficult expression of justice for you to accept?